Proposed Language for SSMP Goals, Objectives, and Milestones

Updated 8/24/2018

Introduction

The following goals, objectives, and milestones come directly from the Fish and Game Code, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Natural Resources Agency. The purpose of these goals and objectives is to direct the development of Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) plans and projects, including the Phase 1 10-Year Plan. Since 2002, California has periodically enacted laws establishing and reaffirming state policy [CA Fish & Game Code §2930 *et seq.*] for restoring the Salton Sea and permanently protecting the fish and wildlife resources dependent upon it. These goals and objectives constitute the existing authorities for expending state funds and are critical to the direction and credibility of the SSMP.

Phase 1 10-Year Plan

The intent of the SSMP Phase 1 10-Year Plan is to direct the State of California's efforts at the Salton Sea to protect fish and wildlife resources, develop shoreline and aquatic habitats, suppress dust from exposed playa, and obtain necessary funding, consistent with existing statute. Additionally, this Phase I Plan demonstrates the state's commitment to meeting its long-term mitigation and restoration obligations at the Salton Sea through the end of the Quantification Settlement Agreement, and lays the foundation for subsequent Salton Sea activities. This Phase I Plan describes the objectives and sequencing of 29,800 acres of proposed habitat and dust control projects through the year 2028, and the implementation of the water backbone infrastructure necessary to deliver water to these projects. (Source: revised work plan language).

I. State Obligations

The State Water Resources Control Board's Revised Order WRO 2002-0013 (p. 3) states:

> This order achieves a reasonable balance between the State's interest in protecting the fish and wildlife that depend on the Salton Sea, the State's interest in protecting the economy of Imperial County, and the State's interest in the implementation of this transfer to meet California's water supply needs.

The August 2016 "Memorandum of Understanding By and Between the United States Department of the Interior and the California Natural Resources Agency Regarding the Coordination of Activities to Manage the Salton Sea" ("MOU") states that "[u]nder the [Quantification Settlement Agreement] the State of California agreed to assume responsibility for environmental mitigation requirements in excess of $133 million (in 2003 dollars), the amount that the QSA requires three local water agencies to pay for this purpose." (MOU at p.2)

Assembly Bill 71 requires the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, in consultation and coordination with the Salton Sea Authority, to lead Salton Sea restoration efforts.

II. Salton Sea Management Program Goals

As stipulated by Fish & Game Code (section 2930-2945), the goals of the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) are:

"(1) Protect and provide long-term conservation of fish and wildlife that are dependent on the Salton Sea ecosystem.

(2) Restore the long-term stable aquatic and shoreline habitat for fish and wildlife that depend on the Salton Sea."

(3) Mitigate air quality impacts from restoration projects using the best available technology or best available control measures, as determined by the South Coast Air Quality Management District and the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District.

(4) Protect water quality.

(5) Maintain the Salton Sea as a vital link along the Pacific Flyway.

(6) Preserve local tribal heritage and cultural values associated with the Salton Sea.

(7) Minimize noxious odors and other water and air quality problems.

(8) Coordinate with local, state, and federal agencies that are responsible for air quality, endangered species, and other environmental mitigation implementation requirements of the Quantification Settlement Agreement.

(9) Enhance economic development opportunities that will provide sustainable financial improvements benefiting the local environment and the economic quality of life for communities around the Salton Sea." [CA Fish & Game Code §2940 *et seq.*]"

10-Year Committee-Recommended Goals

The 10-Year Plan Advisory Committee has developed additional goals to build upon the Fish & Game code and to support implementation of the Phase 1 10-Year Plan. These goals are not legally codified, but are put forth as recommendations for achieving the State's goals and responsibilities at the Sea.

(10) Protect water quality sufficient to sustain healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

(11) Maintain the Salton Sea to a size determined by reliable average flow balanced with maximizing multiple benefits of habitat and dust coverage.

(12) Coordinate restoration projects with stakeholders, such as the QSA JPA and others, that are implementing projects at the sea. Coordinate renewable energy project development with partners around the Salton Sea.

(13) Develop an operations and maintenance plan for long-term success of projects post-construction and secure funding for ongoing operation and maintenance of projects.

III. SSMP Objectives set by Salton Sea Task Force [Source: http://resources.ca.gov/salton-sea/task-force/]

- Begin immediate implementation and further development of Salton Sea management plan
- Improve public outreach and local partnerships
- Accelerate project implementation and delivery

- Meet a short-term goal of 9,000-12,000 acres of habitat creation and dust suppression projects at the sea, [the 10/9/2015 press release at https://www.gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=19161 states this as "Restoring up to 12,000 acres of shoreline habitat over the next five years"]
- Set medium-term goal of 18,000-25,000 acres of habitat creation and dust suppression projects at the sea [the 10/9/2015 press release at https://www.gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=19161 states this as "Restoring up to 25,000 acres of additional exposed shoreline starting in 2020"]
    - Short-term projects will address dust suppression and natural resources needs while laying the foundation for a long-term Salton Sea management framework.
- Ensure Oversight by Regulatory Agencies
- Consider opportunities for increasing renewable energy development at and around the Salton Sea

"The California Water Action Plan (January 2014) calls for protection and restoration of key ecosystems, including the Salton Sea. The California Water Action Plan provides that the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), in partnership with the Salton Sea Authority, will coordinate state, local and federal restoration efforts and work with local stakeholders to develop a shared vision for the future of the Salton Sea. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Department of Water Resources are immediately to begin implementing the first phase of this effort with the construction of 600 acres of near shore aquatic habitat to provide feeding, nesting and breeding habitat for birds." [Source: SWRCB ORDER WR 2017-0134.]

IV. SSMP Milestones [Source: SWRCB ORDER WR 2017-0134.]

"24. Consistent with Recitals B, C, and D [of this Order], in addition to currently planned and funded habitat projects (Red Hill Bay, Torres Martinez wetlands and Species Conservation Habitat) and all QSA JPA funded Salton Sea mitigation projects, restoration milestones detailed below are necessary to address public health and environmental concerns during Phase 1 of the SSMP. Additional projects and milestones will be developed for subsequent phases to address public health and environmental concerns.

a. By December 31, 2018, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on 500 acres of exposed playa.

b. By December 31, 2019, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 1,300 acres of exposed playa.

c. By December 31, 2020, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 1,700 acres of exposed playa.

d. By December 31, 2021, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 3,500 acres of exposed playa.

e. By December 31, 2022, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 1,750 acres of exposed playa.

f. By December 31, 2023, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 2,750 acres of exposed playa.

g. By December 31, 2024, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 2,700 acres of exposed playa.

h. By December 31, 2025, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 3,400 acres of exposed playa.

i. By December 31, 2026, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 4,000 acres of exposed playa.

j. By December 31, 2027, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 4,000 acres of exposed playa.

k. By December 31, 2028, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on an additional 4,200 acres of exposed playa.

"25. No less than 50% of the acreage described in condition 24 shall provide habitat benefits for fish and wildlife that depend on the Salton Sea ecosystem. Projects that provide habitat benefits for fish and wildlife do not include dust control projects that involve surface roughening, vegetation enhancement and surface stabilization." [Source: SWRCB ORDER WR 2017-0134.]

"26. Beginning with the development of Phase II, and in close coordination with stakeholders, CNRA will complete a long-term plan by no later than December 31, 2022." [Source: SWRCB ORDER WR 2017-0134.]

V. Habitat Goals and Objectives [Source: primarily, 2006 draft PEIR Appendix H-1]

"The primary habitat goal for restoration is:

- Restore Salton Sea ecosystem and the permanent protection of the wildlife dependent on that ecosystem.

"Specific objectives include, to the maximum feasible extent, the following:

- Restore long term stable aquatic and shoreline habitat for the historic levels and diversity of fish and wildlife that depend on the Salton Sea;
- Promote habitat diversity by maintaining a mosaic of habitat types within and adjacent to the Salton Sea in an arrangement that enhances their value to fish and wildlife;
- Enhance the quality of habitat through improvements in water quality and water management;
- Promote the effective use of the available water resources to create habitats that provide for species diversity and abundance; and
- Incorporate flexibility in the facility and habitat designs to help accommodate adaptive management and the ability to respond to future changes in conditions and the status of individual fish and wildlife species (encourage solutions that rely on natural processes and minimize intensive, sustained interventions)." (2006 draft PEIR Appendix H-1, pp. H1-3 – H1-4.)

"[O]ne of the objectives is to maintain the historic diversity and levels of use at the Salton Sea, with an emphasis on the avian community. To maintain bird species richness, habitat at the Salton Sea following restoration must support the same functions that were supported at the Salton Sea in the recent past, such as invertebrate and fish production, nesting and roosting structures, undisturbed loafing areas, and shallow and open water foraging areas." (2006 draft PEIR Appendix H-1, p. H1-7.)

"The perimeter of the Salton Sea (wetted edge) to a depth of 3 feet effectively represents the area where forage resources can be captured by shorebirds. The area comprising habitat along the shoreline (0 to 3 feet in depth) is about 6,000 acres." (2006 draft PEIR Appendix H-1, p. H1-15.)

"Extending from the shallow shoreline, the vast majority of the area of the Salton Sea is occupied by open water that provides habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife. The distribution of fish and wildlife in the open water is concentrated along the near shore areas. Researchers identified the area extending a distance of about 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) from the shore as the area of greatest use by fish and birds. This area is used primarily by waterbirds, including those that feed on fish and invertebrates. The open water functions by providing area and substrate for fish and invertebrate production. Birds use open water for loafing, foraging, rafting, and as a staging area prior to migration. Open water also provides birds with protection from most predators and human disturbance." (2006 draft PEIR Appendix H-1, p. H1-16.)

"Five key habitat types are used by birds at the Salton Sea: playa; mudflats and shallow water; mid-depth water; deep water; and permanent vegetated wetlands. … Four factors appear to be strong drivers of bird use of Salton Sea habitat: amount of shallow water, sediment composition, amount of open water, and proximity to rivers and river mouths. (Jones et. al. 2016, p. ES-1.)

Table 3. Preferred habitat available at the Salton Sea, rounded to the nearest 100 acres.

Type of Habitat	Preferred habitat, 1999 (acres)		Preferred habitat, 2015 (acres)	
Playa	10,600		12,200	
Mudflats and shallow water	26,100	(12,000 - 65,100)	28,000	(13,600 - 65,700)
Mid-depth water	18,900	(7,800 – 41,000)	19,900	(8,100 - 43,400)
Deep water	52,400	(46,000 - 61,300)	53,000	(46,500 - 61,700)
Permanent vegetated wetlands	2,500	(500 - 7,800)	3,100	(700 - 8,600)
Aggregate[1]	**58,400**	**(51,000 - 73,200)**	**57,600**	**(50,200 - 72,500)**

1. The aggregate is calculated as the combined footprint of all five types of habitat. Because some habitats overlap at the scale modeled, the aggregate is not equal to the sum of the five types of habitat.

(Jones et. al. 2016, p. 20.)

Jones, A., Krieger, K., Salas, L., Elliott, N., and Cooper, D. S. 2016. Quantifying bird habitat at the Salton Sea: Informing the State of California's Salton Sea Management Plan. Audubon California, Point Blue Conservation Science, and Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc.